

CORNISH VERB BOS

THE FOLLOWING DISTINCTIONS ARE MADE IN PAST TENSES.¹

Imperfective (copula – always stative)

(a) **Framing**

e.g. *Parataxis*

An maw **O** sqwith, ytho ev êth dhe'n gwely.

Syntaxis

An maw êth dhe'n gwely pàn **O** va sqwith.

(b) **Non-framing**

e.g. An maw **O** sqwith warlergh an viaj hir tre.

Imperfective (local – always stative)

(a) **Framing**

e.g. *Parataxis*

Yth **ESA** boosty i'n park poblek ha'n teylu a ylly debry hawnsel ena.

Syntaxis

An teylu a ylly debry hawnsel i'n boosty **ESA** i'n park poblek.

(b) **Non-framing**

e.g. Yth **ESA** an carr parkys knack dhyrag an chy.

Imperfective (auxiliary)

(1) **Stative outcome with stative verb-noun**

(a) **Framing**

e.g. *Parataxis*

Yth **ESA** an voves ow qwetyas ro pedn bloodh, saw ny wrug hy cafos tra vÿth.

Syntaxis

Kynth **ESA** an voves ow qwetyas ro pedn bloodh, ny wrug hy cafos tra vÿth.

(b) **Non-framing**

e.g. Yth **ESA** an voves ow qwetyas recêva ro pedn bloodh kyns dyweth an jëdh.

¹ The examples here are all of **O**, **ESA**, **BEU**. There is also **BEDHA** which is used as an habitual imperfect tense, and also as a future tense in the past. But it is outside the scope of this memorandum.

Imperfective (auxiliary) *continued*

(2) Eventive outcome with eventive verb-noun

(a) Framing

e.g. *Parataxis*

Ny wrug an vowes recêva ro hag yth **ESA** hy owth ola.

Syntaxis

Yth **ESA** an vowes owth ola pàn na wrug hy recêva ro.

(b) Non-framing

e.g. Yth **ESA** an vowes owth ola der oll hy fest pedn bloodh de.

Perfective (copula with noun / ordinary adjective – usually stative²)

e.g. Wella a **VEU** sqwith de, saw hedhyw ev yw bewek teg.

Wella re **BEU** sqwith pùb dèdh wosa sùffra covyd.

Perfective (local – always stative)

e.g. An carr a **VEU** dhyrag an chy oll an seythen, saw hedhyw ev yw parkys abell.

An carr re **BEU** dhyrag an chy abàn wrug Tas y brena.

Perfective (copula with verbal adjective - eventive)

e.g. An den coth a **VEU** marow de Merher.

An gollel a **VEU** terrys pàn wrugama hy ûsya.

An flehes re **BEU** dededhys nans yw mis.

Perfective (absolute – eventive)

e.g. Desempys y **FEU** bobm.

The last two usages still preserve the original meaning of Proto-Indo European *bhu- ‘exist’ or ‘grow’. This root is seen in English **BE** and **BUILD** (from Germanic), English **FUTURE** (from Latin), English **PHYSICAL** (from Greek).

We call **O** the short-form imperfect tense (amser anorfennys, form got). We call **ESA** the long-form imperfect tense (amser anorfennys, form hir). We call **BEU** the preterite tense (amser dremenys). These labels are for convenience only. They are based on mediaeval notions of Italic and Germanic grammar, specifically on terminology still employed for Latin and English; they only very approximately reflect the way these tenses are actually used in a Celtic language like Cornish.

² In literary Cornish it may occasionally be eventive. For example, **y feuv sqwith** could mean ‘I became tired’ in an elevated style. But in ordinary colloquial Cornish this would most naturally be rendered as **my êth sqwith**. Note that Nance’s proposed formulation **my a dheuth ha bos sqwith** is unattested and definitely not recommended.